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# How Iraqi Professor Overcame Doubts To Trust a General

## Mr. Jomard, Strong Opponent of Hussein And U.S. Policy, Saw a 'Fellow Human'

By HUGH POPE
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

MOSUL, Iraq -- "Don't expect me to go on television to express gratitude," declared Iraqi historian Jazeel Abd al-Jabbar al-Jomard.

U.S.-led forces ousted Saddam Hussein, a man Mr. Jomard despised, and helped rebuild the scholar's looted Mosul University, Iraq's second-largest. None of that has changed the short, thickset, 51-year-old professor's vehement opposition to Washington's policy and actions in the Middle East.

But over the course of six months, a patient American general and his forces in the 101st Airborne who oversee this section of Iraq's north have slowly managed to win Mr. Jomard's trust. "I learned to see these people as my friends ... once I realized that, as individuals, they had nothing to do with U.S. policy," he said.

How Mr. Jomard made his decision to work with the occupying forces offers a window on one of the most urgent challenges America faces in Iraq: getting Iraqis to actively cooperate in the face of an increasingly effective resistance movement. The U.S. suffered its deadliest day in Iraq since March 23 Sunday. The toll included 16 soldiers killed when their Chinook helicopter crashed west of Baghdad, apparently shot down. (See related article[1].) Last week anti-U.S. forces added car bombs to their attacks on the reformed Iraqi police, the most prominent collaborators with the U.S. occupation and a key to any future U.S. exit strategy from Iraq.

IRAQ IN TRANSITION
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Any form of collaboration carries the danger of being targeted by resistance fighters. Last Thursday, thousands of leaflets were distributed in Baghdad threatening to kill all who "have sold their souls to work with the Americans and the Jews." They also said, "We know for certain who you are," and were signed by the Fedayeen, an organization loyal to Mr. Hussein.

Such pressure causes many Iraqis who want to cooperate to waver and crumple in places where the U.S. occupation isn't as

adroit as it has been in Mosul. Iraqi assistants to U.S. Army personnel often wear dark glasses to avoid being recognized. A translator working for U.S. journalists justifies his job to friends by saying he is brainwashing the Americans.

**Legacy of Opposition**

Opposition to foreign intervention comes naturally to Mr. Jomard, scion of a prominent Mosul family that was a longtime nationalist opponent of Iraq's old British-backed monarchy. When the king was toppled in a bloody 1958 coup, Mr. Jomard's father became foreign minister for the first six months of the new republican regime that followed.

An expert in Christian Europe's medieval crusades against the Islamic east, Mr. Jomard spent several years of doctoral study in Scotland and is familiar with the West. Though unhappy with Mr. Hussein's regime, he expected no good to come from the U.S. invasion.

He remains offended by what he views as a U.S. failure to prevent Israel from occupying Palestinian territories. He knows that Washington supported Mr. Hussein during his murderous 1980s prime. He deeply resents the way the U.S. left Mr. Hussein in power after devastating Iraq's infrastructure in the first Persian Gulf War in 1991, and then led the effort to impose crippling sanctions on the country.

*Jazeel Abd al-Jabbar al-Jomard*

"I swear that even Iraqi ants were affected by those sanctions," says Mr. Jomard, who drives a battered 1980 Datsun with a dashboard held together by tape. "Before, they used to stay in the garden of my house. Now they've even reached my bedroom, looking for things to eat."

The university that Mr. Jomard loved, a sprawling campus of stark concrete buildings and dusty hills, was overcome in the chaos that descended on Mosul after the U.S. forced Mr. Hussein's ouster on April 9. Traffic jams formed at the campus gates as armed looters loaded up everything their cars could carry. They even stole one of the gates.

Mr. Jomard's initial contacts with the U.S. military didn't foster trust or cooperation. He had joined up with other leading Mosul figures that day and gone to ask the newly arrived U.S. Marines for protection. He found the officer sent out to talk to the group to be young, arrogant and interested only in the safety of his own troops. A Sunni Muslim from the majority of Mosul's 1.7 million people, Mr. Jomard felt the Western reporters attached to the U.S. military were interested only in the local Christian priests in the group.

"I felt like I was being confronted with a relic of the British occupation a century ago," Mr. Jomard says.

**New Attitude**

The next day he joined a group of local judges to again visit the base the Marines had established at the airport and appeal for American troops to get a grip on the city. "It wasn't useful. The Americans seemed irritated by us," Mr. Jomard says. "I went home and never went back."

Mosul endured two rough weeks, including a gunfight involving U.S. troops in which a dozen local people were killed. Then the 101st Airborne arrived to relieve the small Marine force.

With the 101st came Gen. David H. Petraeus, the division's commander and, Mr. Jomard says, a new attitude. Gen. Petraeus, a veteran officer who directed peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and has a doctorate from Princeton University in international relations, is a fervent advocate of nation-building. He rammed through a one-month program to pull Mosul together. His men forced the pace on local elections, some of the first in occupied Iraq. Pinned to the map in his war room was the motto: "We are in a race to win over the people."

"We try to be an army of liberation, not occupation. It's very hard to pull off," the general says. "The only way you can win respect is individually."

Gen. Petraeus was one of the most intensive users of money seized from the former regime, a program in which his officers paid more than $26 million directly to Iraqis for myriad projects to get the region going. Beneficiaries included not just the university, but hospitals, irrigation systems and even an asphalt factory. "Money is ammunition," the general says.

Under U.S. supervision, neighborhoods chose a local electoral college of 270 people, which in turn choose a 24-man provincial council in early May. This body soon elected Mr. Jomard to the post of university vice chancellor, even though he hadn't put himself forward as a candidate and was boycotting the U.S.-backed group.

His colleagues pressed him to accept the post. He remained reluctant. "I told them, it's very difficult" to work with a foreign occupier, says Mr. Jomard. "But they played with my emotions, my sense of duty. For us, the looting and chaos in Mosul was a tragedy, spiritually and physically."

Although he took the appointment, he kept his job teaching history, so he could leave the administrative post at any time. He also tried to maintain a psychological distance. "I told myself it would not be dealing with the invader. I would never be a collaborator."

**Reaching an Understanding**

But he began to discover a new face to the U.S. occupation. When the officer in charge of his area passed by, Mr. Jomard told him about three gates hanging off their hinges that the university couldn't fix. Two days later, U.S. Army engineers arrived to repair them.

Mr. Jomard, who had grown up with rhetoric about Arab solidarity, had hoped for aid from the Arab world. But little materialized. Two Persian Gulf states sent gifts, but one included a TV crew who asked him to sing the praises of its generous prince. "When they asked me to sit in front of a banner to do the interview, I had to refuse," Mr. Jomard says bitterly.

Wealthy local families gave about $50,000 to the university, hoping to get it back on track before exam time so that students wouldn't have wasted a year's study. The U.S. officers channeled in nearly $1.4 million, according to Col. Will Harrison, in charge of the 101st's relationship with the university. Much of this early cash came from Iraqi state funds or assets seized from Mr. Hussein's regime. In the longer term, U.S. aid coming through American university-run programs is also on its way.

Mr. Jomard was impressed by the military's efficient generosity. It helped that Col. Harrison accepted the professor's sometimes prickly behavior, and made no demands for public expressions of gratitude. Both men were comfortable with the sort of back-channeling and lobbying that was sometimes necessary.

The colonel, for instance, furthered the university's cause behind the scenes by bringing Mosul administrators and Baghdad officials together with the help of the 134 helicopters in his unit, the 159th Aviation Brigade. Such communication was critical to smoothing over post-Hussein staffing and other organizational issues, since laws still on the books keep Iraq a highly centralized state.

The ebullient 44-year-old pilot, who hails from New York, is responsible for all matters concerning higher education in Mosul as well as the brigade's 2,000 men. He typically spends two hours of his long days on university matters and has assigned captains and lieutenants to pay similar attention to each of the institution's 19 faculties. They, too, have come to terms with Mr. Jomard's determination to build an image of independence for his academy.

Mr. Jomard "only lets us on campus because we're nice," jokes Maj. Mike Shenk, a U.S. officer from the 101st Airborne and one of Col. Harrison's deputies in the 159th. He was passing by the university after dropping off yet more cash for items such as office furniture, telephone exchanges, computers, air conditioners, refrigerators and ceiling fans. Returning Maj. Shenk's warm smile, Mr. Jomard acknowledged a fondness for the American.

That didn't stop him from pulling Maj. Shenk aside that day to ask the 101st to remove two U.S. Army lookouts posted on the engineering faculty roof. Mr. Jomard says he understood their need to watch a road in front of the university, where attackers had twice hit U.S. patrols. But the dean of engineering was furious and the soldiers' presence on campus could trigger student protests. Two days later, they were gone.

Mr. Jomard remains suspicious of the Americans. He admits he even got caught up in popular outrage that swept through Mosul after a baseless rumor suggested that Israel was taking advantage of the U.S. presence to buy local land. "What causes fear is the size of America. ... We might just be a little part of a much bigger policy," he says. "I have no desire to find myself at my age like the Palestinians, suitcases in my hand and my family on the road."

**Trust Builds Dividends**

Rising local anger forced a United Nations agency and some foreign nongovernmental organizations to leave town. The antiforeigner attitudes put constant pressure on Mr. Jomard. "One or two professors said that Jazeel, who we thought was working for the interests of the people, is now shaking hands with the enemy," Mr. Jomard says. "I feel that I am shaking hands as a fellow human."

Worse was to come. Mr. Jomard was indirectly told by the anti-U.S. forces to stop cooperating with the Americans. He dismissed the threat, hoping he would be protected by his reputation as an observant Muslim known for popular public lectures on Saladin -- the Kurdish prince from Iraq who drove the crusaders out of Jerusalem.

"I, too, believe the American occupation should end, but if they leave now, everyone will be killed on the streets, there'll be civil war," Mr. Jomard says.

His own behind-the-scenes lobbying with occupation forces has paid dividends. When the Baghdad Coalition Provisional Authority, the central U.S. occupation power, ordered the sacking of all senior members of the former Baath Party, it would have crippled some of the university's departments. Mr. Jomard and the chancellor pressed for the best of the 130 to be kept on. The 101st Airborne fought his case in Baghdad and won a reprieve that kept the teachers in class.

One day during the summer, Col. Harrison stumbled into a confrontation with some angry graduates demanding jobs that had been promised by the former regime. He found Mr. Jomard at his side, "picking them out by name, and telling them, 'I didn't educate you to talk like this,' " Col. Harrison remembers. Mr. Jomard, in turn, recalls with amazement Col. Harrison's calm handling of provocative, anti-American questions.

Trust grew to the point that when a much-delayed graduation day came around in October, the university faculty did the once unthinkable: They invited a uniformed Col. Harrison and a U.S. civilian administrator into the semicircle of dignitaries that bestowed the top degrees. "It was wonderful," Col. Harrison says.

The moral juggling act thrust upon Mr. Jomard by the occupation has led him to rethink his former view of history as black and white, cause and effect. "Sometimes a man can be caught up in events that are more powerful than himself," he says.

**Write to** Hugh Pope at hugh.pope@wsj.com[3]

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